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Policy Brief - DENMARK

The project aims	EMILIE PROJECT OVERVIEW <p>EMILIE examines the migration and integration experiences of nine EU Member States and attempts to respond to the new challenges that multiculturalism is facing in Europe in the early 21st century. EMILIE studies three important areas: Education; Discrimination in the workplace; Voting rights and civic participation, in Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Latvia, Poland, Spain and the UK. EMILIE aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● track the relationship between migration-related diversity and citizenship, i.e. multicultural citizenship, across these EU countries; and● identify whether multicultural citizenship is emerging in Europe, and if so what distinctive patterns and types can distinguished.
Case studies	EMILIE conducted three policy-related case studies in each country. The first set of case studies focused on education policy and the measures and practices adopted in dealing with cultural diversity in secondary education. The second set of case studies assessed the implementation of the EU 2000 Anti-Discrimination Directives in the different national contexts. And the third set of case studies investigated voting rights and overall issues of political participation and representation of migrant communities and ethnic minorities in the countries studied.
Definitions	(Multicultural) Citizenship: The notion of citizenship requires a self-governing political community in which individuals have rights and correlative duties enforced by law but are likely to also have a sense of shaping and being shaped by a public space that goes beyond law and politics. Multicultural citizenship debates ask how citizenship can be fully enacted for and by individuals that are culturally diverse.
Methods, data and period of reference	Each case study focuses in the last twenty year period (from 1989 till today). Data collected include policy documents, media coverage, scholarly studies, statistical data, qualitative interviews with key informants, and where it has been possible discussion groups with civil society actors and policy makers.
Focus	The project is concerned with migration-related cultural diversity and not with historical, native ethnic minorities. Special attention is paid to religious diversity and issues concerning Muslim migrants as their integration in European societies has been approached as increasingly challenging in these EU Member States.

Main findings

Immigrants and their descendents make up 10 % of the total population in Denmark. The number of bilingual children (the Danish term for children whose parents are of immigrant origin) has risen to above 60.000 in the public primary and secondary school (0-7th; 8th-10th grade) with an additional approximately 10.000 in state co-financed private schools. About 10% of the children in Danish schools are bilingual. Some 20.000 children between the age of 3 and 5 are bilingual. Many of these children, due to the segregated residential patterns of immigrants and descendents in Denmark, attend schools with very high percentages of bilinguals. The immigrant population of Denmark is generally younger than the rest of the population and the percentage of school children of immigrant or immigrant descendant background will increase significantly in coming decades. The field of minority educational integration has received considerable state and local council attention in recent years, and important improvements in the academic attainments of some groups is visible.

Main lines of the education policy approach in the field

A traditional emphasis on cultural, political and above all linguistic integration into Danish society, using the established institutions and philosophy of the Danish public school, coupled with a view of minority culture as dysfunctionality relative to such integration.

- A strong recent emphasis on bi-lingual Danish language education and bilingual education, and early age language stimulation
- Cultural diversity policies have only evolved as the outcome of local, pragmatic responses.

Main shortcomings of Danish primary and secondary education

- A continuing crisis of attainment of a large 'residual group' of particularly male students
- Shortage of skilled bilingual teachers despite heightened political and administrative attention to this field
- A tradition of very heated politicization of educational policy in the context of immigrant integration, potentially jeopardizing long-term oriented and evidence-based tools of improvement
- Resistance to and suspicion towards all sorts of cultural minority accommodation, which is virtually by default seen to conflict with Danish norms of equality and liberalism

Method

This policy brief is based on analysis of policy documents, national statistics, media debates, expert interviews and the existing literature on the topic. The main focus is on public schools and partly publicly financed private schools, educating children in the age of 6 to 17 years. 17 percent of children in this age group are enrolled in the private schools.

The immigrant population

There are 526.000 immigrants and descendants in Denmark (including those who are naturalized citizens), making up almost 10 % of the population. Of these 6,4 % were from non-Western countries. The biggest groups of non-Western origin are from the predominantly Muslim countries Turkey, Iraq, Lebanon and Somalia. Over the last decade labor market integration of non-Western immigrants has improved significantly, employment rates rising from 36% in 1997 to 55% in 2007; and un-employment rates dropping from 27% to 10 %.

School performance of immigrant children and descendants

An OECD report from 2003 indicated that less than half of the bilingual children left school (after 9th or 10th grade) with Danish skills and other skills that were sufficient to pursue further education. In 2007 National research counted 54 % 'functional illiterates' (insufficient reading skills) among non-Western immigrants, rising to 64 % among children of Arab language background. This should be placed in the context of a relatively large residual group – consistently between 15 and 20 % - of Danish school leavers generally, with a majority of boys, who are in the same situation.

However, there has been significant improvement in the higher end of educational achievers, particularly for women, and particularly for the group of descendants. The percentage of non-Western descendants (including naturalised) enrolled in an upper secondary (high school level) or higher level (further, university) education is now (2008) at 68 % (compared to 77 % of Danish ethnic origin), but was only 63% in 1999. First generation young immigrants are somewhat less likely to pursue upper secondary or further/university education (rising from 49% in 1999 to 56% in 2005, but dropping to 42 % in 2008).

Looking at university and other further education, a clear and positive shift has taken place between 1997 and 2007, the percentage of 20-24 year old immigrants and descendants almost doubling from 20 – 38 % (compared to Danish youngsters' increase from 36 % to 46 % in the same period). A worrying gender gap among immigrants and descendants seems to be appearing. Looking at university-level education in isolation, in 1995/1996 17 % of male and 15 % of female descendants (20-24 years old) were pursuing degrees, whereas in 2006/2007, these figures had gone up to 19 % men and a very significant 31 % women.

Main policies for addressing diversity in the school population

The Danish state, after public and political alarm in response to PISA-evaluations and other reports in 2003-2004, and in line with other initiatives in the field of immigrant integration, has implemented a series of policies initiated by the liberal-conservative government, including:

- Extended introduction of obligatory language stimulation and screening at pre-school level
- Introduction of targeted teaching in Danish as a second language, both as a separate subject and as an integrated aspect of other subjects.
- Introduction of Danish as a second language in teacher training colleges
- Mandatory dispersion of bilingual students ('bussing') across school districts to avoided segregated learning environments
- The introduction of all-day integrated schools

All of these policies were targeted towards the improvement of academic achievement and in particular Danish language acquisition. There is no tradition in Danish educational policy to recognize cultural, ethnic or religious diversity as a basis of regulation, e.g.in school curricula, let alone legally codified accommodation of minority students. Diversity policies, while not non-existing, have been local and informal, subject to school jurisdiction. Publicly financed mother tongue language teaching, obligatory since 1976, was abolished in 2002.

Along with the emphasis on language ability, the liberal-conservative government has pushed for changes in curriculum and teaching to facilitate more 'cultural' integration (Danish culture and history) and 'civic' integration (citizenship education and liberal values).

**Policy
Implementation
results and
shortcomings**

Learning achievements in primary and lower secondary school education have not improved a great deal, although evaluations suggest significant local variation. The very large group of low achievers persists, and functional illiteracy remains a formidable obstacle to further advances in the otherwise significantly improved situation of further and higher education attainment figures.

Whereas some of the measures recently introduced – all day schools, preschool language screening, perhaps bussing (although this is regarded as controversial by many educationalists and observers) – have been welcomed and received positive evaluations locally, there is a need for sustained comparative research and exchange of experience in order to establish what works and what does not work.

Several observers of the field ascribe these problems to certain special cultural and structural features of the Danish primary and lower secondary education system, including relatively few daily lessons, informal teaching styles, heavy reliance on parent support and home work-assistance, and absence of formal marking and other structured feed back in early school years, which systematically handicap immigrant children and other children from un-academic backgrounds.

There is a lack of understanding, including science based knowledge, of the interaction – negatively or positively – between such features and institutionalised practices of the Danish educational system and the cultural and social backgrounds of immigrant children. Also, and in addition to these existing concerns, it should be realized that the very strong, and increasingly politicised, emphasis on cultural and civic integration in the field may stand in the way of a nuanced discussion of the significance for the well-being, self-respect and educational attainment of students, of intercultural measures and dialogue.

**Key Messages for
Policy Makers**

The field of primary education has become a key priority of recent government policy and important advances have been made in, particularly, language teaching and educational attainment levels. In particular recent improvements in the field of bilingual primary and secondary school teaching must be consolidated. However, the field – as other policy fields in Denmark - is characterised by a very strong onus on ‘cultural integration’, and on minority culture as a necessary obstacle in this process. This mirrors a continuing politicisation of Muslim immigration and integration issues, which sometimes stands in the way of rational and experience-based policy development. Attention should be brought to the significance, for purposes of positive integration, of a measure of concern for, and recognition of, minority culture and cultural diversity more generally.

Experience with, and discussions of, cultural diversity policies and interculturalism has remained marginalized in Danish debates on educational integration. Official policies and recommendations, which have exclusively emphasized exposure to Danish culture, history, citizenship, and civics education, should add interculturalism to this agenda, while seeking inspiration from other European countries, such as Britain, Germany and Sweden.

Proposed measures

- Further and continued training in bilingual teaching in Danish and other subjects is urgently required and should be facilitated in teacher training colleges and via in-job training of teachers working with children of immigrant background.
- The recruitment of teachers of second generation immigrant background should be encouraged.
- In view of important educational and intercultural argument in its favor policy makers should consider the re-introduction of state subsidized mother-tongue teaching for targeted groups, although with a view to improving the didactic quality of such teaching.
- The effects of new initiatives remain unmeasured. Diverse regional and institutional strategies in such fields as language teaching, pre-school screening and language preparation, intercultural pedagogy and bussing constitute a laboratory for targeted comparative policy research, which should be encouraged.
- In the medium run, and based on a broad debate with stake holders and academics, policy makers may consider the balancing and integration of Danish culture and citizenship with a measure of minority recognition/knowledge, i.e. expressed in the preamble to the law on Danish primary and secondary schools, as well as in regulations of such subjects as Danish, History, Social Sciences and Christianity.
- The decentralized development and inter-institutional exchange of pragmatic, workable responses (as opposed to strict legal codification) to religious and other minority requirements and demands (dietary requirement, Ramadan, headscarves, changing room facilities) should be further encouraged.

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For general information on the Project please contact Prof. Anna Triandafyllidou, Project Coordinator, at anna@eliamep.gr.

For more information on the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Programme of the European Commission please see:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/index_en.html